

Monthly Update - May 2008

Department of
Sustainability and
Environment

Land management

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) will continue to work with Goulburn Murray Water (G-MW) to provide advice on managing the area to prevent land degradation and damage to native vegetation. This will enable the land to be in the best possible condition for future restoration.

The cutting down and removal of dead trees or wood from the site by members of the public is not assisting with the restoration. It is important that people understand that the damage to or removal of fallen or standing dead timber from Lake Mokoan is dangerous and illegal. The dead trees and wood provide an important habitat for birds and reptiles in the area and will be critical once the lake is decommissioned.

Lake Mokoan Operation - 2008/09 season

Goulburn-Murray Water is planning to continue use Lake Mokoan as an operational storage during the 2008/09 irrigation season. Water from the storage will help supply the irrigation and domestic and stock demands of diverters in the Broken Water System.

The preference is to have Lake Mokoan at approximately 8% of its full capacity on 30 June 2009. This is equivalent to the maximum volume held by the original Winton Swamps that existed in the area before the construction of Lake Mokoan.

The prolonged drought has caused the volume of water held in Lake Mokoan to fall well below the preferred level following decommissioning.

If the opportunity arises, Goulburn-Murray Water will harvest enough water into Lake Mokoan to meet the supply needs of the 2008/09 season, ending with the storage being left at the desired 8% level. This outcome is highly dependent on seasonal conditions and irrigation demand over the next 12 months.

Without inflows, Lake Mokoan will dry out as evaporation and demands in the Broken Water System remove water from the storage.

Lake Diverters Pipeline

Designs and specifications received from designers URS for the pipeline and associated works are currently being reviewed by the project team and G-MW technical services groups. Feedback has been provided to the designers.

Tenders for the supply of pumps have closed and are being assessed; the Pump Supply tender is to be awarded in early June. Tenders for other works are expected to be called in June/July.

Discussions with SP-Ausnet for the provision of upgraded power supply to the new pump station are nearing finalisation.

Discussions continued with CFA regarding the proposed fire fighting strategy and access points from the diverters pipeline.

Reliability Offset Package

The DSE and G-MW are meeting regularly with the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) which includes a sub-committee of local irrigator representatives.

These meetings are to consider supply offset measures aimed at minimising the impact of Lake Mokoan's decommissioning on irrigators.

At the VFF's request, DSE has engaged the Valuer-General to provide independent advice on the value of water in the Broken irrigation system.

The Valuer General has met with the VFF (including irrigators), DSE and G-MW representatives and has commenced the process to select a range of typical irrigated properties in the Broken system for assessment.

Upgrading of controls for remote operation and monitoring of the Lake Nillahcootie outlet structures is well advanced, with a new downstream flow gauging station now installed.

Flood Study

There has been extensive research undertaken regarding the flooding potential in the area as a result of decommissioning Lake Mokoan.

The DSE is working in partnership with the Benalla Rural City Council, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) and G-MW to alleviate concerns raised by the Benalla and District Flood Awareness Group and the community. As a result, environmental and civil infrastructure engineering consultants, Cardno Willing, have been contracted to conduct a study of the impacts of Lake Nillahcootie on flooding in Benalla.

The study, funded by the DSE, is expected to be completed by end July 2008.

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